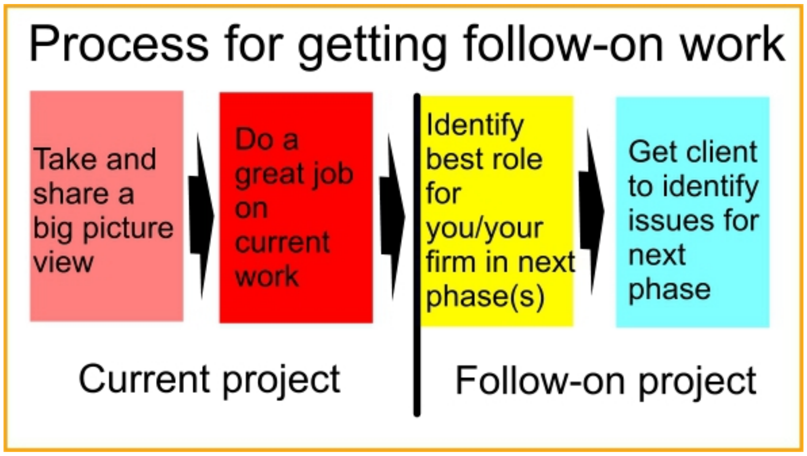
Getting follow-on work

Many professionals involved in multi-stage projects wonder how they should position themselves to do the "next piece of work". For example, a consulting firm might be thinking about helping with implementation after a strategy study.



The current project

The path to follow-on work begins before your initial (current) project launches. By **laying out the big picture of everything that needs to be done**, you and your client begin the project thinking through the whole process. This lets you (and them) identify steps to take now that can make the future easier.

Then you **do a great job on the initial (current) project**. Nothing lays a better groundwork for future success.

The follow-on project

As the current project moves forward, you need to **figure out the best way for you to help the client** and the value of your assistance. Think about these options, and others, as potential ways to be involved:

- Do the work
- Train their people to be able to do the work

- Help with the oversight of the work
- Something else

Assess the client's capabilities and its alternatives. Is it fair to conclude your help would be worth the price? Often it can be, because you bring experience of the project, the organization and the people, in addition to relevant skills.

To lay the groundwork for doing the work, the best route is usually to **have a specific kind of conversation with the client**. The conversation aims at understanding how the client is going to solve his/her problem (and not at all about how you could help). Keep the focus on the problem as the client's problem, not as your problem.

<u>How the client is thinking about the problem</u>
The first part of the discussion focuses on the client's view of the situation. Ask questions like:

- What are you planning to do next?
- What are you most concerned about in that plan?
- What are the risks or the things that could go wrong?
- What is the price of failure?

<u>Helping them think about their next step</u>s
In the second part of the discussion, you can offer some ideas, but always looking at it from the client's situation. You can make a statement like:

> "In light of what I know about your organization and the situation (and there may be important facts that I don't know) , if I were thinking about what to do in your shoes, I'd think about X,Y and Z. Is that right? Or are there other factors to consider too?
>
> In light of that, I'd be thinking about an approach that including A, B, and C. What else should somebody be thinking about?"

You add value by having the conversation, and demonstrate that you bring information and insight. If they like what you are saying, suggest that they get it down on paper. Often, at this stage in a project, the main competitor to you is "do it ourselves." If the client is going to struggle to "do it themselves," you want them to understand that now (not only later -- when they get themselves in trouble). In thinking through their plan, they may well find that they would actually like help and ask you to provide it. The client can explain to you what they can do themselves and where they now see needing help. The help they see they need becomes the basis for your proposal.

What to do this week

Review your projects. Segment them and then take appropriate actions:

- For projects that are *just starting,* find a way to engage with your client about the big picture.
- For projects that are *further along*, identify the best role for you (in terms of client value) as the project winds up.
- For projects that are *winding up*, determine when you'll talk with the client about their view of what they'll be doing next.